

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

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AMEMBASSY TAIPEI
AMCONSUL HONG KONG
USLO PEKING
CINCPAC HONOLULU
COMUSJAPAN YOKOTA

C O N F I D E N T I A L TOKYO 18343

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PFOR, JA
SUBJECT: JAPANESE LEADERSHIP CHANGE

SUMMARY. FUKUDA REMAINS ODDS-ON FAVORITE TO REPLACE MIKI
AS PRIME MINISTER. DECISION WILL BE MADE DECEMBER
23 AND NEW CABINET WILL BE SELECTED SHORTLY THEREAFTER.
END SUMMARY.

1. WITH PRIMIN MIKI EXPECTED TO ANNOUNCE HIS DE FACTOR
RESIGNATION ALONG WITH PROPOSALS FOR LDP REFORM IN THE NEXT DAY
OR SO, PACE OF POLITICAL
MANEUVERING AMONG CONSERVATIVES HAS INCREASED MARKEDLY.
FORMER DEPUTY PRIMIN FUKUDA REMAINS ODDS-ON FAVORITE
TO SUCCEED MIKI. IN ADDITION TO SUPPORT OF HIS OWN
FACTION, HE IS PLEDGED SUPPORT, ALBEIT WITH SOME
GRUMBLING, OF OHIRA, TANAKA, MIZUTA AND -- LESS CLEARLY --
SHIINA FACTIONS. NOT UNEXPECTEDLY, OPPOSITION TO
FUKUDA SUCCESSION HAS SURFACED IN MIKI FACTION, AMONG
YOUNGER MEMBERS OF NAKASONE FACTION, AND IN AD HOC
GROUP OF SOME THIRTY YOUNGER DIET MEMBERS LED BY
BUNSEI SATO AND CENTERED ON YOHEI KONO'S

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OLD QUASI-FACTION.

AD HOC GROUP HAS CALLED FOR MASS RESIGNATION OF ENTIRE TOP ECHELON OF PRESENT LDP LEADERSHIP, BUT NOW INSISTS ONLY ON BALLOTING FOR LDP PRESIDENT--AND PM--NOT NECESSARILY HURTFUL TO FUKUDA.

2. MIKI HIMSELF HAS TWICE HINTED THAT HE TOO OPPOSES A FUKUDA SUCCESSION. THUS THERE IS CONSIDERABLE INTEREST IN MIKI'S PROPOSALS TO REFORM LDP, NOT ONLY FOR THEIR POTENTIAL IMPACT ON PARTY ITSELF, BUT ON FUKUDA CANDIDACY AS WELL.

3. IN RELATED BUT SEPARATE ACTION, FORMAL LDP LEADERSHIP DECIDED THAT LDP'S PRIME CANDIDATE -- AND ALMOST CERTAIN NEXT PRIME MINISTER -- WILL BE SELECTED AT DECEMBER 23 CAUCUS OF ALL LDP DIET MEMBERS IN BOTH HOUSES. AS YET IT UNCLEAR WHETHER LDP PRESIDENCY WILL ALSO BE DECIDED AT THAT TIME AND, IF SO, WHETHER DETERMINATION WILL BE MADE THROUGH PRIVATE NEGOTIATIONS OR FORMAL BALLOTING.

4. LDP LEADERSHIP ALSO WILL BE DISCUSSING WITH OPPOSITION PARTY COUNTERPARTS PROPOSAL TO OPEN DECEMBER 24 A FIVE-DAY EXTRAORDINARY DIET SESSION. IF APPROVED, PRIME WOULD BE FORMALLY NAMED DECEMBER 24 AND NEW CABINET DECEMBER 25-26, ALTHOUGH POSSIBILITY OF SOME SLIPPAGE REMAINS. CHOOSE COMMITTEE CHAIRMEN AND CLOSE DECEMBER 28. AS REQUIRED BY CONSTITUTION, REGULAR DIET SESSION WILL BE OPENED DECEMBER 30 FOR 150 DAYS (TO MAY 28). SESSION EXPECTED TO RECESS IMMEDIATELY AFTER OPENING UNTIL ABOUT JANUARY 20. THAT WOULD COMPLETE POLITICAL SCHEDULE FOR 1976.

5. IN SEPARATE ACTION DECEMBER 13, TWO ADDITIONAL CONSERVATIVE INDEPENDENTS (NAKAMURA, HORINOCHI) JOINED LDP BOOSTING LDP LOWER HOUSE SEATS TO 260, MAJORITY OF FIVE SEATS. ONE MORE CONSERVATIVE INDEPENDENT (TAMAZAWA) EXPECTED TO JOIN LDP IN NEAR FUTURE. HODGSON

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